

Part of the Picture

The Voluntary and Community Sector across South Yorkshire



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Executive Summary

1. The background to the mapping study

This study forms part of an emerging and ongoing programme of research coordinated by South Yorkshire Open Forum into the nature and development of the Voluntary and Community Sector in South Yorkshire. It builds on the results of an initial scoping study carried out in 2005, which identified that an 'extensive' mapping survey of the scale and scope of the VCS across South Yorkshire is a key research priority. 'Are You Part of the Picture?' was, therefore, conceived as an attempt to increase the understanding of what the VCS across South Yorkshire is and does. The research involved a postal survey of voluntary organisations and community groups operating in South Yorkshire carried out in May-June 2006. Analysis was undertaken on the basis of the 692 valid responses to the survey.

2. The 'anatomy' of the Voluntary and Community Sector in South Yorkshire

How many voluntary and community organisations are there?

It is estimated that there may be at least 6264 voluntary organisations and community groups operating in South Yorkshire. Just over half are based in Sheffield, 21% in Rotherham, 14% in Barnsley and 12% in Doncaster. Nearly three fifths are registered charities (59%). Just over two fifths of organisations (42%) work at a small scale neighbourhood or community level. Just over a fifth of organisations (22%) operate across a single district.

When were they established?

Overall the VCS in South Yorkshire in 2006 appears to be quite 'young' - around a quarter of organisations have been in operation for less than 10 years, and just under a half for less than 20 years. The 'busiest' five year period for the establishment of organisations which are operating in 2006 appears to be between 1994 and 1998, with 1996 apparently the 'busiest' year. The current VCS in Sheffield and Rotherham appears to be slightly older than that in Barnsley and Doncaster.

What does the Voluntary and Community Sector do?

The VCS in South Yorkshire is very diverse. It makes a contribution across a wide range of areas and in many different policy domains. Lots of organisations span several areas at once. Nearly two fifths

(39%) of voluntary organisations and community groups in South Yorkshire are involved in leisure, recreation and sport activities. Just under a third of organisations are involved in education, research and training. Between a quarter and a third are involved in some form of social welfare activities, such as welfare and social care (32%), childcare, play and youth work (28%) and health (27%). Smaller proportions are involved in more specialist areas of work, such as environment and conservation (18%), economic and community development and regeneration (17%), community safety (11%) and housing or homelessness (10%).

It is estimated that the total number of people using services provided by the VCS in South Yorkshire as a whole in a year is 17.1 million. Individual organisations work with lots of different groups of people. Around half of all survey respondents (51%) state that they work with all members of their community. Where organisations tend to work with particular groups, the main focus appears to be older people (37%), children aged between 5 and 15 (32%) and young people aged between 16 and 24 (31%).

3. Resources in the Voluntary and Community Sector: people, money and buildings

Large numbers of people are estimated to work either paid or unpaid in the VCS in South Yorkshire, as the table shows.

	Estimated total number	Female	Male
Paid staff	25,700	66%	34%
Volunteers	112,500	59%	41%
Management Committee members	50,500	51%	49%

Note: The figure for volunteers includes those serving as management committee members

Paid employment in the VCS

Nearly two thirds of organisations across South Yorkshire (63%) have no paid staff at all, leaving just over one third (37%) with at least one member of paid staff. Overall, just over half of employment in the sector consists of full time positions (of 30 hours or more per week). Part time employment of between 16 and 30 hours per week makes up 32% of total employment, and the remaining 17% consists of part time employment less than 16 hours a week. There are about twice as many women working in the sector as men, but female staff are more likely to work part time than male staff.

Volunteers and management committee members in the VCS

Overall 41% of organisations have less than 10 volunteers. Just over one third of organisations (38%) rely on the equivalent of up to 1 day of volunteer time in total per week. A further third (35%) rely on the equivalent of between 1 and 5 days volunteer time per week. Nearly half (48%) of volunteers are aged 50 or above, one third (33%) are aged between 25 and 49, and nearly a fifth (19%) are aged under 25.

Overall two fifths of organisations in South Yorkshire (40%) have between 5 and 9 committee members or trustees. In aggregate, there appears to be a healthy balance between more long standing management committee members and newer recruits: two fifths (39%) of committee members overall have served on the committee for less than 3 years.

How big are voluntary organisations and community groups in South Yorkshire?

Most of the VCS is made up of very small groups, run entirely on voluntary effort. Three quarters of voluntary organisations and community groups in South Yorkshire (73%) have an income of less than £50,000 per year, three fifths in total (61%) have less than £20,000, and just over one half (51%) have an income of less than £10,000 per year. There are some, but relatively few, very large voluntary organisations: 19% have an income exceeding £100,000 per year, 6% exceed £500,000 and 3% exceed £1m income per annum. The distribution of organisations across different income size bands is similar between the four districts: between 17% (Rotherham) and 20% (Sheffield) of organisations have incomes exceeding £100,000 per annum.

How much is the Voluntary and Community Sector worth?

It is very difficult to capture and describe the contribution of the VCS in South Yorkshire, given its diversity and the typically intangible role it plays. One way of quantifying the contribution is to estimate the total income of the VCS. Using the survey results as a basis, the total income for the VCS in South Yorkshire for the most recently completed financial year is estimated to be £843 million.

4. Organisational Development

What are the main problems facing the VCS in South Yorkshire?

The research asked survey respondents to consider the extent to which a range of 22 different issues represented a problem for their organisation. This provides a 'snapshot' of the health of the VCS in 2006. The five most pressing issues for the voluntary and community sector in South Yorkshire as a whole appear to be:

- (1) **funding:** both 'raising funds' generally (over half of respondents - 51% - regard this as a significant or major problem) and 'skills in being able to put in good quality funding bids';
- (2) **volunteers:** 'finding and recruiting new volunteers' (48% regard this as a significant or major problem) and 'keeping and developing volunteers';
- (3) **'time to get involved in networks and partnerships';**
- (4) **'getting new members and users involved in your group',** and
- (5) **'getting the right skills and experience on your management committee'.**

How severe are the issues experienced by the sector?

An average of 59% of respondents reported the range of 22 issues facing the sector to be a problem. However, only just under a quarter (23%) tend to regard them as major or significant problems. Groups based in Doncaster and Rotherham appear less likely overall to report issues as a problem, compared with those based in Barnsley and Sheffield. Similarly, organisations with incomes between £10,000 and £99,999 per year appear to experience the greatest problems. The smallest organisations (less than £10,000 income per year) and the largest organisations (£500,000 or more income per year) appear less likely than average to report issues as problems.

Can organisations access the external support they need?

Two thirds of survey respondents overall (66%) report that '*finding out what support is available*' is a problem and a quarter (24%) find it a significant or major problem. But there is some variation amongst different groups: the oldest organisations (those aged 50 years or more) and the smallest organisations (those with incomes less than £20,000 per year, and/or those with no paid staff) are more likely to regard it as a significant or major problem.

5. Future Challenges

Anticipating change in the next three years

Respondents to the survey considered how a range of 18 factors (covering general issues, staff and volunteers, finances, and external relationships) may or may not change for them over the next three years. Overall a slight majority (54%) on average perceive that the 18 issues will remain the same. But a majority of respondents expect things to change in four key areas: '*our expenditure overall*' (66% anticipate change), '*our income overall*' (65%), '*the total value of grant funding*' (62%) and '*expectations regarding the service we deliver*' (59%). The smallest organisations (with incomes less than £20,000 per year) and the oldest organisations (those aged 25 years or more) are more likely to anticipate that things will remain the same than the average for all organisations, whilst the youngest organisations (those aged less than 5 years old) and the largest organisations (those with incomes exceeding £100,000 per year) are most likely to expect that things will change.

Anticipated change in services, people, finances and external relationships

Over half of organisations (54%) believe that ‘*expectations regarding the service delivered*’ will increase in the next three years, but this increases for larger organisations. Only 36% of the smallest organisations (with incomes below £10,000 per year) anticipate that expectations will increase, compared with 60+% those with incomes of £10,000 or more per year.

Higher proportions of the larger organisations expect the number of paid staff and the number of volunteers will increase over the next three years, compared with smaller organisations. Overall under one third of organisations expect the number of paid staff and volunteers to increase. Around 40% of organisations expect their income overall to increase, but this contrasts somewhat worryingly with the 55% who expect their expenditure overall to increase. Larger organisations, and the youngest organisations, tend to expect their incomes to increase in the next three years.

Just over a third (35%) of organisations expect their involvement in networks and partnerships to increase. A similar proportion (34%) believe that their influence with statutory agencies will increase. The largest and youngest organisations are more likely to expect that these kinds of external relationships will increase, whereas the oldest and smallest organisations are more likely to anticipate that they will remain unchanged.

Will organisations still need external support?

Nearly two fifths of organisations overall (38%) expect that the need for external support from VCS infrastructure over the next three years will increase. Larger organisations (though not the largest), the youngest organisations and organisations based in Barnsley appear to be more likely than average to expect that this need for external support will increase.

6. Conclusions and implications

The report discusses a number of implications of the findings. Three of the main ones are that:

1. Alongside the ‘big numbers’ estimated for the sector’s income, staff and volunteers, it is clear that the VCS is involved in many different aspects of South Yorkshire life. As such it is truly ‘Part of the Picture’. It is involved in health, in regeneration, in childcare and youth work, and in sport and leisure. It campaigns, trains, provides advice, facilities, services and social activities. It works across and beyond South Yorkshire, and at neighbourhood and community level. It is both part of the strategic picture for South Yorkshire, but crucially also part and parcel of everyday life.
2. But at the same time, it is clear that there are a number of issues of concern for the sector, including the ‘perennial problems’ of money and people: raising funds and getting volunteers. It is arguable that the sector continues to be in a relatively fragile position. If this is a signal that existing ‘capacity’ in the sector could so easily be lost, it also recognises that its contribution could so readily be enhanced by a strategic approach to sector development.
3. As well as looking at the South Yorkshire picture overall, the research has sought to recognise and capture the voluntary and community sector’s diversity. Much of the analysis has explored differences apparently experienced by different types of organisation, by district, size and age. The important overall research finding here is that there are different outcomes for organisations in different circumstances. As a consequence, a more fine-tuned approach should be taken to both policy on the sector’s development and the practical support offered to different parts of the sector. Underlying this is a necessary shift in understandings and assumptions about ‘*the Voluntary and Community Sector*’ in South Yorkshire, which in reality reveals a number of different faces depending on the circumstances. Sector policy and day to day practice should always as a result at least question whether it reflects and responds to that diversity.

*The full report is available from South Yorkshire Open Forum:
Tel: 01709 519 100; www.syopenforum.org.uk*

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